

The Glasgow Keelie

No. 2 'Salt of the Earth' May 1990



Salvador Lally ascending into Heaven

1990: year of the chancer

PEOPLE'S POWER HITS GLASGOW

A CITY ON THE MARCH. That was the scene on Saturday 31st March, as 40,000 demonstrators chanted 'We're no paying the Poll Tax' through the centre of Glasgow.

The unemployed, pensioners, trade unionists and disabled came in their thousands. And despite some pathetic stalinist attempts by the council to restrict the march, the streets belonged to the people.

Every week since, more and more determined action has been taken against the lackeys that so ineffectually try to enforce the hated tax. Open season has been declared on Sheriffs Officers.

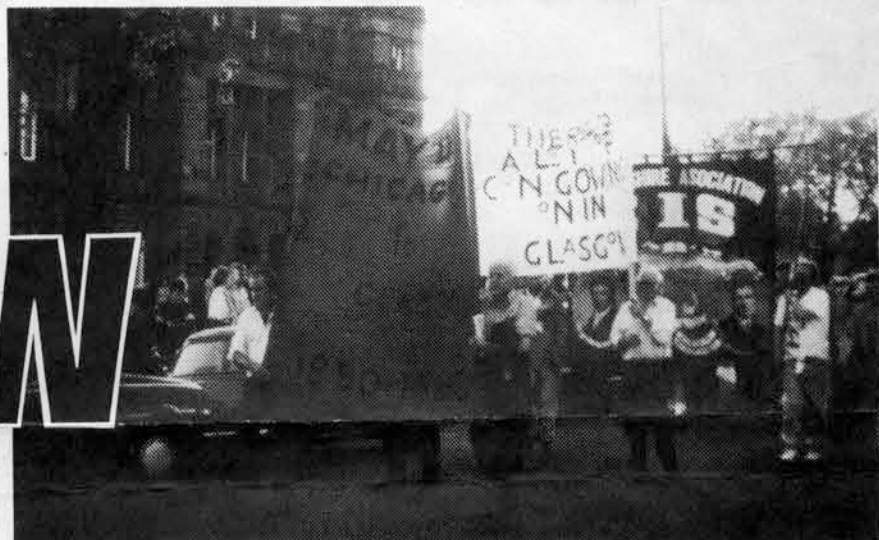
The nightmare of bureaucrats the world over shows signs of reality: the working class is becoming uncontrollable!

However with the Regional

Elections over, the phoney war is at an end. The Council will now vigorously push its warrant sale policy.

But the powers-that-shouldn't-be would do well to heed the warning coming from the people! *God help the councillor who approves a warrant sale.*

• FROM CHICAGO TO GLASGOW: A HUNDRED YEARS OF MAYDAY read the banner at the front of the first weekday 1st of May demonstration



for generations.

Led by The Marauders - the most gallus pipe band in Scotland - 200 people marched from Glasgow Green into the Calton. The police could only stand bemused at this latest, completely unofficial show of people power.

At the rally, the lively audience heard Farquhar McLay damn Culture City and all it stood for. Freddie Anderson laid into Pat Lally in verse, and the Clutha and Gordeanna McCulloch sang some great workers' songs, old and new.

Ann Kerr's bawdy and hard-hitting play, *The Last Threads*, about the end of the weaving industry in Glasgow. Performed by Ann and other ex-mill workers, with help from Dorothy Paul and Alien Arts, it went down a storm with the audience, which included many old Calton and Bridgeton weavers.

The evening recaptured the true spirit of a Glasgow Mayday, an event that has been in danger of becoming another yuppie sideshow. Everyone left determined to make it an annual event.

THE DEAR GREEN PLACE

IT IS rather ironic that Flesher Haugh in Glasgow Green where the present football pitches are, is now the target for the yuppies' developers, ably assisted by the Mutt and Jeff of the Glasgow District Council, Messrs Crawford and Lally.

This whole area was reclaimed from the Clyde by the workers' sweat and if the above crew of asset strippers have their way it is due to become a theme park with water sports and an art gallery costing £5 million thrown in.

Glasgow Green has had many threats from developers going back many years: in 1820 test borings were done to see how much stocks of coal lay below the Green. The city fathers knew better than to allow mining to take place as the weavers whose mills were on the periphery of the Green would have fought such a proposal to the bitter end.

As well as leisure the Green is and was a place for demonstration, agitation and education for the ordinary people, from the Chartists, the great Reform movement to some of the most important free speech campaigns in Britain. In Guy Aldred's life story told by John Caldwell in his book 'Dungeons Dark' he describes his trial where he was charged along with John McGovern and Harry McShane of unlawful assembly. They believed it was the inalienable right of any citizen to speak in the Green, and despite going to jail most of them continued the fight until the law was changed. It is probably the first open air forum that held Marxist classes, starting with Willie Nairn and continuing right down to John McLean.

The only way to stop these developments is summed up in a song by Adam McNaughton who rediscovered a ballad of Airt John who wrote a similar song with the message:

"The esteemed weavers fought here, to get a decent living"

*We fought to stop the railway in 1847
We fought to stop the coal mines fae ruining the scene
We'll fight to stop a motorway across the Glasgow Green*

*There arenae many choices when cars approach a toon
You've either got to keep them oot or else to slow them doon
An inner city motorway's a concept quite obscene
For Glasgow people want to walk about the Glasgow Green*

*You Glasgow District Councillors, it's time to change your plan
The Calton folk and Brighton folk don't want your Autobahn
You can stuff your eight lane highway up - you know where I mean
We will not have a motorway across the Glasgow Green.*

SUPPORT THE FREE SPEECH PLATFORM

2.00PM
GLASGOW GREEN

Here speakers on:

- GLASGOW THE WORKERS CITY
- PAY NO POLL TAX
- SAVE GLASGOW GREEN



• *Their Glasgow and ours: a yuppie Porsche in the Gorbals.*

THE CULTURE OF GLASGOW

GENERALLY speaking, and with some few exceptions, it is obvious that indigenous Culture in Glasgow is finding it a very difficult struggle to make its way.

Why should this be when there is a wealth of literary and theatrical talent in Glasgow, including its huge peripheral housing-schemes. It is my opinion that the authorities, for all their lip-service to Culture are very wary lest they open the flood-gates in Glasgow to an immense popular Culture, not Hollywood, Broadway or London-based, that will sweep away within very few years all the hackneyed, time-worn ideas that have been foisted on the people by a servile, manipulated media-machine for decades. I also contend that this suppression and distortion of truth began in Glasgow at the end of the Eighteenth Century with the appearance of Robert Burns's works in the Kilmarnock Edition.

These poems of Robert Burns were such a powerful exposure of the wickedness of the Establishment that it sent them scurrying for ways to undo the damage Burns was causing. Burns received not a single review in any Glasgow paper for his Kilmarnock Edition, but two mealy-mouthed letters that might have come from Holy Willie's pen appeared in *The Mercury*, signed *Amicus* by an obvious denigrator of Burns. Such is how the authorities in Glasgow hailed Scotland's greatest literary genius ever. I would not choose to mention this, had, after the great Edinburgh Edition of 1787, the City Fathers and Chamber of Commerce tycoons repented. They never did. Burns presented such a challenge to their

by
Freddy Anderson

philistinism, hypocrisy and 'North British' servitude, that they erected the highest monument in George Square to the loyalist minion, Sir Walter Scott, decades before the pennies of the Glasgow people paid for the much lower plinth of Robbie Burns on the grass verge. And despite their sustained verbal accolades to Burns every January, they are still unrepentant. There is scarcely a plaque in the entire city to acknowledge the twenty or so links Burns had with Glasgow.

BANNED

However, the Glasgow Establishment's treatment of genius and truth extended far beyond Burns to include anyone who challenged their domination by wealth and power. It banned the local radical paper, *The Spirit of the Union*, and transported its editor in the hulks, in 1819. They gaoled Sandy Rogers, the best satirist in Scotland. His excellent work is still excluded from the school curriculum. James Macfarlane, whose gifts were recognised both by Thackeray and Dickens, lived in poverty in a Glasgow attic, died of T.B. when he was only thirty years old and was buried in a pauper's grave. Thus the Rodgers and Macfarlanes were neglected and in their stead throughout the whole of Victorian

Glasgow, a lick-spittle, sentimental, pseudo-religious trash was foisted on the people of Glasgow in the name of poetry. Poetry was emasculated of its substance and strength and the rubbish published in Glasgow was a mere mockery of the real thing. All this happened at a time when Glasgow was rapidly becoming the greatest slum city in Europe. What you might ask is the connection between poetry and slums. Well, poetry is the seminal source of all literature, and can evoke a powerful protest against injustice. But the purpose of a Culture controlled by the upper classes, who were prospering at the expense of the masses in 19th century Glasgow, was to stifle the literature of protest and encourage a petty literature, a literature of escape from reality. This did not enhance reality, it worsened it. The other 'escapes' were the wine and spirit 'palaces' and the music halls; there were churches in plenty to 'comfort' the pious. Schools and churches and newspapers combined to hide the facts and the real history of Glasgow from the people. A Glasgow person searching even today for a real history of his or her city is almost in the same bewildered state of a foster-child looking for its real parents. It is so well concealed. The 'masters' of Culture have done their task exceedingly well.

PHILISTINE

Hugh Macdiarmid (Christopher Grieve), the greatest Scottish poet in the two centuries since Burns, saw through the 'Culture Game' and called for a new alertness among the people both in

politics and creativity. It was in the 1930s along with his literary friend, Lewis Grassie Gibbon, that the best Scottish novelist of this century, matured. Neither of these exceptional authors had a smooth passage among the philistines of Glasgow. Macdiarmid's worldly circumstances were never very high and Gibbon's widow (Gibbon died in his thirties) was refused by a Glasgow publisher, her offer of the second edition of that marvellous novel, *'A Scots Quhair'*. On the other hand, trash like *No Mean City*, a slur on Glasgow, was being peddled in England in tens of thousands of copies without a chirp of protest from our City Fathers or our elevated Chamber of Commerce. This 'book' created the false image that Glasgow was a city of thugs, whereas in fact it was a city of radicals and trade unions fighting for elementary rights.

The real Culture of Glasgow has existed, not in the upper echelons, but in the heart of Glasgow among the tenement dwellers. These created the Bands to lead the Unemployed during the Hunger Marches of the 30s. It lay in people like John MacLean and the Clydeside Workers Committee who defied both the Glasgow and the London bosses in the fight against War and the exploitation of the poor. This is the real Culture, which though suppressed and hidden by the authorities, survived underground and was orally transmitted from parents to children from the early 19th century in the Glasgow tenements. It was not from the teachers in the schools or the Glasgow Herald journalists that folk learned to seek out the Calton Weavers Grave of 1787 in Abercrombie Street, or the Sighthill Monument of 1820. It was from their grannies, and fathers, and mothers, cousins and aunts.

DEFIANT

The real Culture of Glasgow lay in true poets and writers like Sandy Rodgers, James Macfarlane, William Miller, Joe Corrie; in artists like Harry Keir and Tom MacDonald, etc.; in agit-prop theatres, like Unity, Theatre Workshop and Wildeat. In recent days it has existed in the great rallies against the Poll Tax, for Culture too is politics. It exists in the proud defiant songs of Matt McGinn and Hamish Henderson and dozens of others. It lies in the growing fight against injustice imposed by a Tory elected English Government in London, whose Laws are administered by a pseudo-'socialist' gang in the City Chambers and India Street. They have shrunk the noble Red Banner into a diminutive rose, as puny as their brains, and are hell-bent in shrinking Socialism to the same size. Both the City Chambers and the Chamber of Commerce, join together to perpetuate a Capitalism that for all its braying over Eastern Europe's dilemmas is quite moribund itself. All of you lot will easily afford to see Pavarotti & Co., but in spite of your ringside seats you are still on the periphery of real Culture and you will ever remain so. For the simple reason that you have always regarded Culture, and still do, as a commodity that money can buy. It cannot, no more than love or friendship.

The Curse of The Keelie

MILLIONS TO BE WON!

JUST ANSWER one simple question:

Who is the secret capitalist who'll rake in a fortune from the development under Central Station after the 1990 ball is over?

Apply to the Scottish Development Agency. (Winner of the 1988 Garden Festival 'Sale of the Century': Laings the Builders.)

THE KEELIE GUIDE TO WORDS AND THEIR MEANING

- **Pernicious** *a.* Unjust, but pay the bloody thing anyway. As in Donald Dewar: 'This pernicious Poll Tax...'
- Readers from Castlemilk or Drumchapel might like to look up 'peripheral', as in 'the council's peripheral schemes', in their dictionaries. It means 'of minor

importance'.

- And speaking of planners, an Australian exile was outraged to hear the expression 'Glasgow overspill': "How can they refer to human beings as overspill?"

'NUFF SAID!

The only people in Glasgow who value art are auctioneers.

William Petrie, the Glasgow Clincher, 1901.

HOMES FIRST!

The scandalous story of Glasgow Housing with • Speakers • Play extracts • Singers

SUNDAY 27

MAY 7.30PM

WINTER GARDENS PEOPLE'S PALACE

Admission Free

Tickets from Clydeside Press, 37 High St. Scotia Bar, Stockwell St.